Brady Says He'll Show New York An Octet That Can Play Classic Drama

Such Actors Are Rare in These Days, He Agrees with Brander Matthews, but He Knows Eight of Them and Will Assemble Them at The Playhouse in September.

BY HENRY MACMAHON.

"HOW do you—a commercial manager—expect to make your repertory Playhouse pay after the repertory experiment has been tried and discontinued by The New Theatre?"

This question was asked of William A. Brady as he was conducting the visitor into his spacious press department, where the chief Brady scribe, W. D. Coxey, was busily preparing "canned" interviews concerning the Grace George repertory company. The inquiry so interested the manager that he hastily bade Coxey shelve the "canned goods" and himself granted a face-to-face interview.

"How do I?" repeated Mr. Brady. "By reason of smaller expenses in running my house; by the absence of big, costly productions; the construction of The Playhouse, which allows of handling productions quickly and easily; by substituting for a terribly expensive double company a small nucleus of first class players, say eight persons, whose combined salary list will foot from $2,200 to $2,500 a week.

"The New Theatre was not a failure," continued Mr. Brady, warming to his subject. "The Comédie Française never showed in an equal space of time such achievements as those of The New Theatre company in the last sixteen months. I have been in New York and interested in New York theatricals since 1888. Unquestionably the man whose achievement is the finest and proudest in the history of all that period—considering the short length of time he has been with us—is Mr. Winthrop Ames. If there's any New York producer I could possibly feel jealous of, it is he. As a matter of fact, I could never occupy his position because I haven't his education.

PRAISE FOR WINTHROP AMES.

"Why, Ames was everything you have preached and prayed for," said Brady, torrentially, addressing as it were an imaginary circle of the critical "death watch" assembled on a theatrical first night. "A gentleman; a scholar; free from any taint of sordidness; well read in all dramatic literatures; well versed in stage history and traditions; sure in his judgment of actors; artistic to his fingertips—and those of the handicaps he worked against! Fifty per cent of the newspaper press hostile—coldly indifferent. The home of The New Theatre experiment, built for operatic purposes and unsuitable for any except the largest dramatic productions. The very audiences—15 per cent of the patronage—unable to distinguish the actors' faces or make out more than a part of the speeches.

"Not only was Mr. Ames's direction of The New Theatre a great artistic achievement, but the box office receipts were enormous—equal to those of any other two New York theatres combined. No week last season fell below $12,000; some weeks rose as high as $25,000. If that does not indicate popular support, what does?

"If you will study The New Theatre record, you will notice that every play in which a personality succeeded proved financially profitable by virtue of that personality. Herein is the secret of modern repertory production. America requires the power of compelling personalities to bring audiences within the theatre and keep them there. England is still more the slave of personalities than we are. In The Playhouse I shall not have a stock company, in the ordinary sense of the term, but rather a small group of players of stellar rank."

"Will your organization be permanent?"

"You had better put it that I shall keep up the policy of The New Theatre while The New Theatre is out of existence. With the new New Theatre—when that is started—I shall not attempt to compete."

"How many new works do you expect to produce?"

"I can't tell. Enough to build up a repertory for Miss Grace George. Associated with her will be a distinguished English leading man, with whom I am now negotiating; a great character actor of the Wilton Lackaye or George Fawcett type, and five other players of calibre equal to the very best. These will appear in each of the productions. The minor actors I can get any time or anywhere. New plays will be produced at short intervals until the repertory is completed."

"Do you really mean," asked the skeptical inquirer, "that you will withdraw a successful play in the height of its run to put on another, an untried play, for an experiment?"

WEEDING OUT POOR PLAYS.

"I mean just that," answered Mr. Brady confidently. "Let us say that Play No. 1 is a huge success, Play No. 2 is only a success d'estime, Play No. 3 is a failure, Play No. 4 is fairly good, and Play No. 5 turns out a big winner. Under ordinary circumstances I admit it would be foolish to shelve Play No. 1 even temporarily, thereby exchanging a certain profit for a succession of losses. But my aim in this instance is wider than the immediate profit or loss. When Play No. 1 is withdrawn it goes right into Miss George's repertory, the same with Play No. 5, and also with Play No. 4 if that has a country-wide audience. On the other hand, the failures are shelved quickly and for good. Thus at the end of the season I shall have a repertory of proved successes for Miss George, works with which she can entertain audiences in other cities for much longer runs than heretofore, and in which, moreover, she will always be welcomed back to New York.

"In other words, I aim to do for Grace George what Augustin Daly did for Ada Rehan. Judging from her recent plays, the public has come to look upon Miss George merely as a comedienne—a fluffy young female who has trouble with her husband and wants to win him back again. But I intend to show her in serious plays as well as in comedy, and in some plays of the classic period also."

"Brander Matthews points out that modern actors are unfitted for classical productions," suggested the doubting Thomas interviewer. "Doesn't the failure of The New Theatre company in 'Merry Wives of Windsor' and 'Antony and Cleopatra' bear out his statement?"

"Competent classical actors are rare," admitted Mr. Brady. "Professor Matthews is right to that extent. But I know eight persons who can be got together to play the classics—to play anything, in fact, that they may be called on to play. I am in touch with them now and shall assemble them for The Playhouse repertory organization next September. You refer to 'Merry Wives of Windsor.' That requires an actor of great personality for the part of Falstaff. It would tax the physical and mental resources of any artist, yet the player who impersonated the fat knight was a sick man at the opening and played his part while the victim of a raging fever of 104 degrees. 'Antony and Cleopatra' failed for quite different reasons, the inside history of which I am not at liberty to disclose. The success of the 'Twelfth Night' and 'School for Scandal' revivals, in the latter of which Miss George appeared as Lady Teazle, shows that under favorable conditions the best modern artists are capable of rendering the old plays effectively."

REPERTORY NOT OUTWORN.

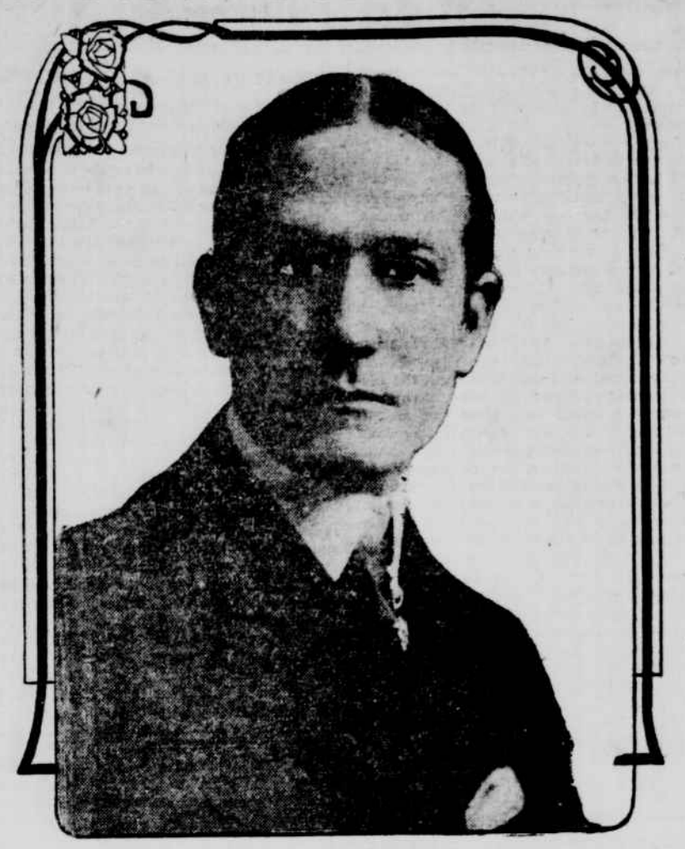
"Then repertory is not outworn?"

"No, indeed," smiled Mr. Brady. "I hope for the time when repertory organizations will become as popular in New York as they have proved in other cities where the public welcomes established favorites week after week and month after month in a succession of plays and characters."

"But not at $2 a seat"——

"Why, the first stock company I was ever in," exclaimed Mr. Brady, "charged $2 a seat and got away with it. That was the old California Theatre stock, in San Francisco, of which Dion Boucicault was stage manager and Tommaso Salvini, Edwin Booth, J. W. McCullough and T. W. Keene were among the principals. No shirking from work, no trusting of theatrical fortunes to one 'hit' there. At the beginning of the week Salvini would enter the greenroom and throw down his repertory: Monday, 'Hamlet'; Tuesday, 'Othello'; Wednesday, 'The Stranger'; Thursday, 'King Lear,' and so it went. We just had to get up six, seven or even eight parts a week, according to the demands of the visiting 'star.'

"Of course," and Mr. Brady smiled again, "I can go into this present experiment only so far as my pocketbook—not an overly big one—will let me go. But I can promise New Yorkers one thing: No one shall ever see on the stage of The Playhouse anything that he would rather not have his mother, wife or sister see. The highest standard will govern not only the selection of the actors, but the choice and stage management of the plays, whether ancient or modern."



WILLIAM A. BRADY.
His new theatre, The Playhouse, will have a repertory company next season.

THE PLAYHOUSE OPENED.

Yesterday The Playhouse, in West 48th street, east of Broadway, was opened, and "Billy" Brady's dream of a producing theatre in New York—the culmination of his twenty-two years' labor here—was realized. The first two performances were given by Grace George and her company in a new comedy, "Sauce for the Goose," following which the farce "Over Night" is announced for a spring run. Next fall the repertory experiment concerning which Mr. Brady has just been quoted will be tried, with Miss George, his wife, at the head of the repertory organization.

Callboy in the California Theatre, stock actor, stage manager, travelling producer of melodramas, exploiter of Corbett and Jeffries, controller of fight pictures, maker of "Way Down East," creator of Grace George as a popular paying "star," producer of a dozen or more sterling American plays, from "The Man of the Hour" to "The Boss"; finally, a recognized position as one of the six most important producing managers in the country; such have been the steps in the Brady career. He is aggressive, pertinacious, has the Irishman's love of a gamble, the Irishman's attitude of looking at life, conversation, business, as so many forms of combat; but the taking of chances and the combative spirit are tempered by long experience and a rarely erring business and artistic judgment, and now, being established in his own theatre and owning besides much other less tangible theatrical property, he is a force to be reckoned with.

He got his training in California "stock" a quarter of a century ago, like David Belasco and other adepts who came to New York out of the great West. Stranger things have happened in New York theatricals than the coming true of William A. Brady's optimistic ambition to revive an obsolescent art-form of his boyhood days.

BRADY AS A FIGHTER.

Apropos of "Bill" Brady's fighting qualities, his peculiar combination of courage and finesse, a world of stories goes the round of the Tenderloin. He was reared in a polite school; the associate of the Belascos, Booths, Barretts, Sheridans and Boucicaults of the Pacific Coast's dramatic heyday; but later as a theatrical "roadster" his experiences were of the roughest. Nothing worthy the name of theatre existed in the Rockies or in the great Northwest.

Seattle, now a city of a third of a million inhabitants, could offer only a library hall sans footlights, scenery and dressing rooms. A miners' hall in Butte and a song-and-dance place in Spokane were the temporary homes of Thespis when the "stock" came to town. The manager carried a "gun," having double need of it; disputes over moneys in the box office and disputes over winnings and losses in the gambling palaces where the travelling actors, as a regular stunt, submitted every dollar of their salaries to the arbitrament of chance.

Belasco was at that time a $25 a week stage manager; Charles Frohman was making his first trip westward as advance agent of Callender's Minstrels; Joseph Grismer was manager of one 'Frisco theatre and Al Hayman treasurer of another. Brady worked for Hayman at $10 a week, subsequently for Grismer at $20 a week. But he didn't stay the hireling very long. At an age when most youths are still at their lessons he was out for himself on the mining camp and gambling hell circuit, a boy manager, bossing his actors and when occasion required jumping in himself and playing any part from the Second Gravedigger up to Hamlet. As a last resource was the "weepun" in his right-hand breeches pocket, a final "argument" rarely resorted to, but mighty handy to have around when the bad men of the Far Western country got nasty.

The most peaceful times of Brady's tempestuous career were, paradoxically enough, those of his prizefight exploitations. "I never had any trouble with fighters," he said recently. "High priced actors have caused me a whole lot more worry. Why were the fighters so easy? Oh, I simply could think more quickly than they did; that's all!"

SAVING THE "WHEAT PIT."

Brady's scrappiness, indeed, has nothing to do with physical size or strength. At best he could qualify merely for the bantam class, yet his friends are fond of relating two incidents that show him fully equal to emergencies.

At the Lyric Theatre some years ago a strike of the hundred and fifty supernumeraries threatened to prevent the production of "The Pit." The "wheat brokers," assembled in the basement of the theatre, had their dander up, and declared they wouldn't go on in the Board of Trade scene unless their pay was doubled. Brady upstairs, as he thought of the impending fiasco of the play before the crowded audience and critics, got madder and madder.

"Come along, Tuckman!" he cried to his burly property man. They took the stairs on the run. When they reached the supers' room they were travelling at cyclone speed. Brady grabbed one ringleader by the scruff of the neck and the seat of the trousers. Tuckman grabbed the next. They ran the couple into the street in lightning time, came back, grabbed two more, forcibly expelled them likewise and so on until the ten fomenters of trouble had all been thrown out.

That settled the supers' mutiny. The leaderless mob capitulated on Brady's own terms, and in the big Board of Trade scene their yells and frenzied fighting were so realistic one could never have guessed they had just been overawed and trounced by the little manager of 130 pounds and 5½ feet perpendicular.

About a year ago sounds as of violent altercation were heard issuing from the Brady offices. Occupants of neighboring studios guessed that (in theatrical parlance) it was a case of manager and actor trying to "bawl each other out" in some row over salaries. Presently an animated tumult catapulted itself out of the "William A. Brady, Ltd.," main entrance. To the astonished spectators it looked like a combat betwixt a giraffe and a bobcat.

Closer inspection revealed the tallest actor on Broadway—a Thespian who stands 6 feet 3 inches in his stockings—with the fingers of the diminutive but agile Brady tightly clutching the other's windpipe. Not only had he choked the bawling actor into silence, but ever and anon he would shake the giant as a terrier shakes a rat. Finally, at the elevator door, William A. Brady, Unlimited, gave his enemy a final push and shove toward the outer darkness and then coolly walked back to his office. "Oh, he was easy!" said the manager afterward with a grin. It was all a part of the day's work.

Knowing that the most important battles are not those fought with fists, a friend asked Brady the other day what were his hardest theatrical struggle and his biggest victory.

"'WAY DOWN EAST."

"'Way Down East,'" he replied, without an instant's hesitation. "It was a struggle lasting nearly two years, including seven long months at the Manhattan Theatre, every week of which was a losing one. 'Way Down East' just had to go out into the country and establish itself. The experience was like a drummer's with a new line of goods he's trying to introduce. The goods had to demonstrate merit before there were any reorders. We played the Olympic Theatre, St. Louis, that first season to a week's receipts of $1,900. A year later we came back and got $14,000 in a week!

"I discovered in that campaign that there is an immensely large class of playgoers in the United States who pay no attention to the theatrical columns of the newspapers, who aren't influenced by the billboards, but whose patronage of the theatre is entirely dependent on mouth-to-mouth advertising of a play by those who have already paid to see it. This class is admittedly difficult to reach, but once reached their patronage is good for twenty years. Owing to the depredations of the play pirates, the financial value of "Way Down East' is ruined in the 'night stands.' In the large cities, however, it will outlast the twenty-year-term I have spoken of, and will continue to be popular as long as 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.' I believe in my recent production, 'Mother,' as strongly as I believed in "Way Down East,' and I am having an experience with it somewhat similar to the one with "Way Down East.'"

Another Brady production that started its career to almost empty benches and wound up in a blaze of glory and profit was "The Man of the Hour." Broadhurst's political drama had been declined by one of the keenest Broadway managers. The Brady optimism about it was pooh-poohed and the Brady plan of campaign ridiculed. He made a start with it on the road, then brought it into Philadelphia and induced the manager of a New York playhouse to run down with him to the Quaker City and look it over, with a view to a metropolitan booking.

"Why, Brady, you're crazy!" said the big mogul after sitting out the play. "New Yorkers don't want that political stuff. No, sir, you can't put it in my house!"

BACKING HIS OPINIONS.

Brady was game. "I know I've got a big piece of property in that 'political stuff,' as you call it," he replied, "and to prove my faith I'll guarantee you $4,000 as your share of the weekly receipts for a 'Man of the Hour' run in your theatre!"

"Done!" said the visiting manager, and the bargain was closed. "The Man of the Hour" more than justified its owner's faith. A long and successful run in this city was followed by an unprecedented theatrical "clean-up" of the country, in general, in which at one time five companies in the one play were on tour. And did "The Man of the Hour" fall of maintaining its record anywhere, Brady simply would not admit defeat. "Looks bad, eh?" he said to his booking agent. "Here's the remedy; book each of those night stands as a week stand. Give the people in small towns a chance to learn about it. They'll come!" And they came. The novel methods, the gradual diffusion of the merits of the play in the course of its protracted visit, did the trick.

Whipping a defective or poorly produced play into shape is another of the manager's specialties. Most dramatic entrepreneurs make some pretence of supervising rehearsals, although as a matter of fact the majority of them are absolutely at the mercy of their hired stage directors. Not so with Brady. A Grace George production, for example, is in charge of an efficient war council. Four persons are active in it, namely, the playwright, the stage director, the manager producer and the "star." If the trial production doesn't please, the work is picked to pieces and constructed anew. The playwright must write new lines and scenes; the director must plan new "business"; Mr. Brady busies himself perfecting new effects, and Miss George, the "star," practically remakes the scenes in which she appears.

Then, supposing a principal in the production falls sick at the last moment, even then the ex-Californian is not dismayed. The illness of Frank Worthing in Detroit some time ago left the "Divorcons" company without a leading man, there being no one in the organization considered capable of playing the part of Des Prunelles opposite Miss George. That didn't feaze Brady. He announced promptly that he would play the part himself.

"WINGING" DES PRUNELLES.

His old "stock" experience stood him in good stead, likewise his wonderful faculty of "winging" a part, as it is called. This latter consists of standing in the wings, manuscript in hand, and memorizing the lines (or at least the cues) of each scene just before going on to play it. Worse come to worst, if the cues are firmly fixed in the memory, the lines can be "faked"; that is, their substance reproduced in the actor's own language, and the performance passes off without a hitch. Well, Brady was right on the job as the Frenchman. He "winged" the part the first night, learned it fully the next day, and glided gracefully and easily into a ten-day "engagement" as Des Prunelles, which tickled the Detroiters just as much as it did him.

Speaking of the pirates who played hob with the profits of "Way Down East," bringing it into the "ten-twenty-thirty" class of stolen "rube shows," Brady had his revenge of them at Washington. A delegation of New York theatrical managers was trying to induce the Congressional committee to report favorably a new and stringent copyright bill, enacting a prison sentence for flagrant offenders. They were meeting with poor success. "Send for Brady, the man with the punch!" suggested one of the managers. "He'll jam it through!"

New York was wired, Broadway showmen packed Brady on a train for Washington late that night, and the next morning he appeared in the committee room panoplied for war. It was no begging, whining speech that he made—he isn't that kind of a man. In a stand-up, straight-from-the-shoulder talk he told the representatives that the producing managers had rights that should be respected; that they owned large property interests, and that they were being robbed right and left by sneaks who made stenographic copies of the plays and sold them for $5 apiece to "reptile" managers. He demanded protection from Congress, and he got it. The copyright law, which was passed at the same session, protects the property of dramatists and managers as stringently as it protects book authors and publishers.

Brady has never fought the theatrical labor unions. With one exception he never fought a critic, the exception being the case of a "cricket" who announced in advance of a Brady production that he meant to slate it. But the manager made no bones awhile back of telling Chicagoans that the Windy City was a mighty poor "show town," and that his attractions (and others) didn't receive anywhere near the patronage they deserved. Speaking of the incident Mr. Brady said to the writer:

GRAFT IN TICKETS.

"I didn't discuss the critics in Chicago—they are an eminently fair lot of men, like the critics here. In Chicago I called attention emphatically to the fact that on account of the grafting in tickets the theatres were being ruined. On the one hand the cheaper grade of tickets were being peddled out through advertising agents to cigar stores and scalpers, while the more expensive tickets were held at a heavy premium by speculators and agencies. As a consequence, audiences had dwindled. There are at this minute five theatres closed in Chicago, though the evils I spoke of have been partly remedied.

"I want to tell the New York public that the same thing which happened in Chicago is beginning to happen right here in New York. If it continues, theatrical conditions here will become just as intolerable as they were in Chicago. I refer to the enormous graft in the disposal of theatre tickets by devious, illicit channels. I could give you some startling revelations on this subject, but shall wait till I have collected all the details. Theatrical stagnation—closed theatres and starving players—will be the inevitable result of this underground traffic in tickets, this failure to deal directly and fairly with the public at the box office."

As the writer was leaving the Brady office he noticed an old man working over account books at a far desk. "Who is that?" he asked an attaché. "Why, it's Burt—Frederick W. Burt," was the reply; "manager of the California Theatre in San Francisco when W. A. Brady was a $10 a week callboy. Funny, isn't it? He handed out Brady his $10 a week then, and he hands out Brady his thousands now, for ever since Brady has been a metropolitan manager himself he has kept his hold of Burt as his signer of checks and dispenser of moneys."

Which shows that even a fighting manager may have a streak or two of warm-hearted sentiment in his make-up.

No Lack of Incident in Tom L. Johnson's Rise from "A Mere Monopolist"

It Was the "Three-Cent-Fare" Advocate's Boast That He Started Life as "A Trust," and in His Strenuous Later Career He Was Fond of Recalling, with Many a Jest, the Period of His Youth.

Some forty years ago a big, hearty, likable young fellow drove a horse car in Indianapolis. He was on the night shift. One night there came one of those blinding storms of sleet and snow that almost buried the tracks, and before the driver realized it, when he was rounding a curve, the car was off the rails and had gone two or three blocks beyond the end of the track, slipping along on the ice.

Failure met his repeated efforts to pull the car back, so he decided to leave it where it was, unhitched the horses and drove them back to the barn.

Next day the superintendent called him. "Young fellow," he said, "what do you mean? Haven't you any more sense than to drive a car off the tracks and then leave it in the streets?"

The reply came with no hesitation. "Why, that's in the rules for drivers and conductors."

"In the rules for drivers and conductors!" raged the superintendent. "Where, I'd like to know?"

"Don't you remember?" replied the suave offender. "It says, 'Always be polite to passengers.' Don't you remember what kind of a night last night was? Well, there was a nice old lady on my car who didn't have any umbrella. She lived two blocks from that curve, so I drove her home."

That driver was Tom L. Johnson, the 3-cent fare Mayor of Cleveland, whose picturesque career was ended last week.

This nonchalance of his youth remained with him, and was illustrated in after years when on one occasion he was threatened with contempt of court for his answer in a judicial proceeding.

"What is your occupation?" he was asked.

"A monopolist," was the reply, and he refused absolutely to modify that answer.

An incident in Congress illustrates his practical application of the motto so often facetiously attributed to him, "Do as I say, not as I do."

A trust lawyer, a member of the House, said in debate that Congressman Johnson, in view of his record, ought to vote for the measures he denounced as favoring monopolies.

Johnson promptly retorted, "As a business man I am willing to take advantage of all the monopoly laws you pass. As a member of Congress I will not help you to pass them and I will try to force you to repeal them."

Ohio politicians are still talking about the way Johnson's style of oratory wound up Theodore E. Burton back in 1890, when the latter was Representative from the 21st District and Johnson had just been elected to Congress. They held a joint debate, and every one expected a walkover for the older Congressman, who was a trained speaker, familiar with national affairs and much better educated than his rival. Johnson up to that time had been solely occupied in amassing a fortune by building street railways.

As the debate advanced Johnson's pointed gibes and smiling jests utterly destroyed the effects of the other's lawyerlike arguments. Then with a few strong sentences, uttered with passionate sincerity, Johnson clinched his advantage. From that time on Johnson was known as an orator whom it was not safe to meet.

He used to boast that he began life as a monopolist. It happened during the Civil War, when the family were in absolutely destitute circumstances. Tom, then a boy of thirteen, came to the rescue.

"There was only one train a day into the town," he said, in telling the incident, "and I got all the papers that came in with the eagerly sought war news. I got 15 cents apiece for daily papers and 25 cents apiece for papers with pictures. I made money in that first business venture of mine and in time had saved $88, all in silver, the first real money we had seen in years."

This pride in his record had a fall when he became a single taxer. It was a railroad conductor who wrought the conversion. On a trip between Cleveland and Indianapolis a newsboy asked him to buy Henry George's "Social Problems." The conductor happened to be within hearing and being familiar with George's doctrines and also acquainted with Johnson said, "Better buy it. It will interest you more than any book you have ever read."

Johnson followed the advice and straightway became a follower of Henry George.

After that conversion this is the way he once expressed his opinion of his monopolistic record:

"I have no right to the money I have, except that I was smart enough to get it and you were not smart enough to keep me from it. Now I'll tell you I stole that money from the people, so you can head off any other embezzler you see squinting at a public utility."

Here is his own story of how he himself made a convert to the theories of Henry George. After reading "Progress and Poverty" he advised his lawyer to do likewise. The learned man glanced over a few pages and declared he could refute every argument.

"Do it and give me the result written out on paper," said Johnson.

"I have no time for such employment—the book isn't worth it," was the reply.

"Now, look here," Johnson returned. "You are my attorney. Read that book. Review it carefully. Answer its arguments, which you say are fallacious, and when you have finished hand me your report, with the bill for your services."

A few days later the lawyer returned with this brief: "I give it up. It is a great book."

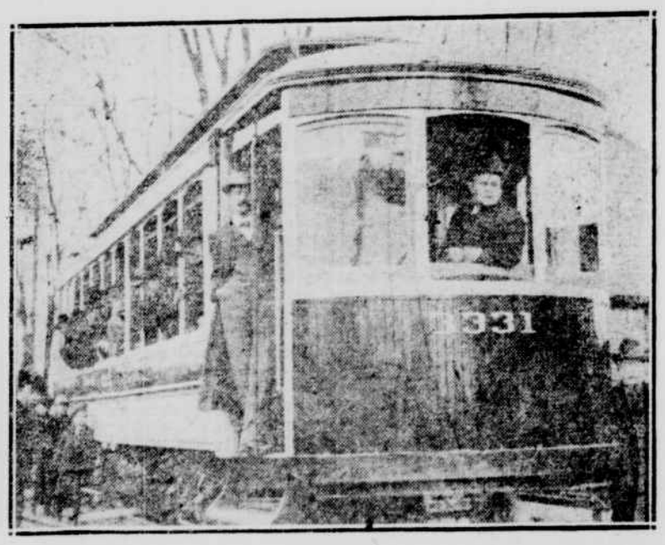
His star performance with "Progress and Poverty," however, was the trick by which he induced the United States government to print it and distribute a million and a half copies free. He accomplished this by incorporating a chapter of the book in his remarks in Congress and getting a number of his associates of similar views to do likewise with other chapters. This series of speeches was printed in the Congressional Record and duly distributed.

It was a climax in Tom Johnson's financial career, as well as an historic event in American street railroading, when the Whitney-Flower syndicate closed with him the colossal deal for the seventeen street railroads of Brooklyn. The men assembled to do the buying represented from $200,000,000 to $300,000,000 of rapid transit capital. Evening came, and the would-be buyers sat with certified checks in their hands waiting for the master of the situation to come down a little in his price.

Mr. Johnson continued always affable and listened politely to all arguments, but his answer continued the same:

"It is my price, gentlemen. Not a dollar less can I take for the property."

So great were the interests at stake that the national banks and trust companies had not closed, although it was past 9 o'clock in the evening. But not for one moment did Tom Johnson lose his genial calm or waver for an instant in his demands. At length the other side yielded, and Johnson was from that time recognized as a national figure in finance.



TOM JOHNSON AT THE CONTROLLER OF THE FIRST "THREE-CENT FARE" CAR IN CLEVELAND.
(Copyright by L. Van Oeyen, Cleveland, Ohio.)

While Mayor he took a keen interest in the Workhouse Pardon Board, of which he was chairman, in whose efficacy he had great belief. Once a pardoned prisoner, to whom the Mayor had given $10, approached the Mayor, who was seated at the head of the table, and, striking a melodramatic attitude, exclaimed:

"Mr. Mayor, you've made a man of me. The cruel world has been a-kickin' me ever since I took the first false step until it has kicked me into the gutter. You're the first human being who has spoken a kind word to me in years, and I solemnly swear to make a new start in life and use this $10 bill for the upbuilding of my shattered fortunes."

"See, gentlemen," said the Mayor, turning to the board. "Save these wretches rather than make them outcasts forever."

The next morning Johnson learned that the individual had gone on a rip-roaring tear, spent his $10 in a saloon near the prison and was again in the lockup on the same old charge.

Sometimes his sympathies suffered a revulsion. On one occasion he took it into his head to act temporarily as police judge and show how to temper justice with mercy. A miserable old woman appeared before him. She had been dragged out of the gutter the night before, drunk. She did not know Johnson, and had no idea that the stern judge before her was the Mayor of the city. She fell on her knees and covered her face with her hands.

"Pity me, judge," she sobbed. "I've been here before, but if you let me go this time I'll never get drunk again, I swear it."

"Don't cry, whatever you do," pleaded Johnson.

But the woman paid no heed to the Mayor, and continued to moan.

"If you keep on at this rate," exclaimed Johnson, sternly, "I'll send you to the workhouse."

And he did.

During his last term as Mayor, while he was riding in his automobile, a passenger train halted across the highway and blocked his passage. He peremptorily ordered the engineer to move out. When the man refused to obey he had the train crew arrested. That was simply another illustration of his contradictory streak.

While Johnson ruled Cleveland the street fakers had things their own way. One day the Mayor walked past the postoffice and stopped before a man who conducted a weighing machine.

"It'll cost you a nickel to get weighed, gents," he shouted, "and if I can't guess your weight beforehand within three pounds I won't charge you a cent."

"Bet you the cigars he can't come within twenty pounds of my weight," said Johnson, turning to a friend.

This was overheard by the "barker," who didn't know the Mayor.

"Make way for the corpulent gentleman, my good people," he yelled, and Johnson elbowed his way through the crowd.

The "barker" then punched the Mayor in the stomach until he said "Ouch!" poked him in the small of his back, felt of his thighs, pinched his legs, slapped his cheeks and finally made a guess of 265 pounds. Then he hustled his honor into the little basket until the machine groaned and squeaked.

"See, gents," he said, "I guessed her right the first shot."

"You're all right," said the Mayor, "here's your nickel," and the crowd howled as Johnson walked off to buy his friend the cigars he had lost.

"Say, do you know who that man was you just weighed?" a man in the crowd asked the machine man.

"That big, fat slob? Naw!"

"Mayor Tom."

"The deuce you say!"

Then he dropped his machine, hurried after the Mayor and offered to return his nickel, but Johnson threatened to deprive him of his license if he persisted in his generosity, and the incident was closed.

He was equally lenient to the boys who endangered the heads of pedestrians by playing ball on the public square. One of the first things he did on becoming Mayor was to remove all the "Keep off the grass" signs. He was passing one day just as an officer started to break up a ball game.

"Let the boys have a good time," the Mayor told the policeman. "Say," he added, turning to one of the boys, "I think I could do a better job of shortstop myself."

He was always a great lover of baseball. On the day of the former Mayor's death the Cleveland baseball club received a letter dictated by the dying man during a temporary revival from a state of coma.

"I probably won't be able to attend the opening game," the letter read, "but don't let that make any difference. Go ahead and win."

He showed himself consistently democratic at the time of his son Loftin's marriage to Miss Hafner, his sister's maid. When the Mayor heard of it after it was all over he laughed and said:

"If he'd had one of those cut and dried flossy church weddings, I'd have disowned him."

Then he telegraphed Loftin to bring his bride home.

Nothing ever unnerved Tom Johnson. One day as he was entering a restaurant an Austrian fired at him point blank, but fortunately missed. The man was arrested, but Johnson refused to prosecute and went on to his luncheon unperturbed.

"The man was drunk," he said, "and didn't mean to hit anybody in particular."

Such proved to be the case.

In 1908, when it looked as though his big fortune were swept away, he said:

"I'm going to be happy yet, too. We may have to go back to a cottage, but that's the way we started, and we can look upon life just as joyfully there as we did in the big house on Euclid avenue. They tell me my enemies are planning to bring financial trouble upon me. I've been expecting it. There's one mistake I haven't made—that of failing to foresee the efforts of those who would like to destroy me if opportunity presented. Let them do what they may. Let them make any sort of attack upon me that they choose, with whatever success, and they will find me with a thousand fights left in me. I'll never give up. I'm well and strong and confident, and they'll always find me at the front."

The next year he was defeated for Mayor of Cleveland, and it looked as though his fight of years had been lost.

"I will be a candidate for Mayor again two years from to-day," was all he said when the returns were in.

Just before he died he sent this message to his inquiring friends:

"How are all the boys? Tell them to be of strong heart and be game. I am game."

That was Tom Johnson.

His Sympathies and Risibilities Were Alike Easily Touched, and His Personality and Mannerisms Were of Such a Nature as to Make Firm Friends or Bitter Enemies of Those Who Knew Him.

Humor Mr. Johnson had in abundance and nothing delighted him more than a funny story. His perfect control over his risibilities was exemplified in a talk with Howard Dennis, the Public Square orator. Howard visited the Mayor's office to sell a photograph of himself for 10 cents. Johnson invested. Then Howard took occasion to express the hope that the Mayor would be successful in his street railway plans and make a lot of money thereby.

"You don't mean that, Howard, do you?" asked Johnson.

"I certainly do," returned Howard. "I hope that you will get rich."

"Howard, don't you know that I can't make money in street railways and be Mayor and stay honest?"

No, Howard did not know that, and left the office. As soon as Howard was safely out of the place the Mayor collapsed in his chair and laughed till he was red in the face, slapping his leg and rocking back and forth in exuberance of his appreciation of the fun in the thing. As long as Howard was in the office the Mayor's face was as grave as that of an undertaker at a funeral.

From the time that Johnson said he would rather be in Congress than in heaven, he loved the game of politics, but he thought, too, there were other things that contained fun besides politics.

"If I ever quit politics," he once confided to a coterie of friends and newspaper men who gathered in his office, "I will either be a monopolist or a lawyer. There is more money in being a monopolist, but more fun in being a lawyer. I guess that I will be a lawyer."

Mr. Johnson was handy with his fists, if the occasion required, notwithstanding his excess of avoirdupois. Yet no man was more uniformly bland and courteous. Seated one morning early in the screened off counting room of his Indianapolis traction offices, and reading a newspaper, a big burly fellow entered and began a tirade against the management because of some trifling loss he claimed to have suffered on one of the cars of the line on the previous day. Tom L. was alone, knew nothing of the matter—indeed, it was merely an accident that he was in the place at that hour at all. After reasoning with the irate intruder and trying to convince him that if there was anything to be righted by the company it would be done in due course, the man flew into a passion and called Mr. Johnson a liar.

Smiling blandly and still holding his unfolded newspaper in his left hand, Johnson stepped from behind the inclosure and knocked the big fellow down. This was such a sudden and unexpected turn to the issue that the big fellow squealed: "Don't hit me again, young feller; I didn't mean to hurt your feelin's."

"Get up, my good man, and get out," said Tom L. "And just bear in mind that what you got means that 'liar' is outlawed in this shanty."

IN NEW YORK.

"The woman across the hall from us is dead."

"How did you find that out?"

"Why, I happened to see it in the paper."—Life